

All you must know about quality and origin marks

A useful guide to understand what Pdo, Doc, Aoc, Tsg mean. Natural and traditional products must be safeguarded and should be recognizable

by Alberto Grimelli

Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) are geographical indications, or more precisely regimes within the Protected Geographical Status (PGS) framework defined in European Union law to protect the names of regional foods.

The law (enforced within the EU and being gradually expanded internationally via bilateral agreements of the EU with non-EU countries) ensures that only products genuinely originating in that region are allowed in commerce as such. The legislation came into force in 1992.

These laws protect the names of wines, cheeses, hams, sausages, olives, beers, Balsamic vinegar and even regional breads, fruits, and vegetables.



The following EU schemes encourage diverse agricultural production, protect product names from misuse and imitation and help consumers by giving them information concerning the specific character of the products:

PDO - covers agricultural products and foodstuffs which are produced, processed and prepared in a given geographical area using recognised know-how.

PGI – covers agricultural products and foodstuffs closely linked to the geographical area. At least one of the stages of production, processing or preparation takes place in the area.

TSG - highlights traditional character, either in the composition or means of production

Schemes cover wide range of quality attributes:

- Processing techniques
- Ingredients
- Origin of raw materials
- Animal welfare
- Environment standards
- Labour standards

Italy probably has the largest patrimony of typical foodstuff products in the world, thanks to the variety of its territory and the multiplicity of cultural influences that have characterised its history. Today, this patrimony is expressed by 176 PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) and PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) products, more than 4000 traditional products registered by the regional authorities and by 350 Controlled Designation of Origin (DOC) and Controlled and Guaranteed Designation of Origin (DOCG) wines.

Denominazione di Origine Controllata (DOC) is a geographical indication shown on the label of reserved wines that meet the requirements set out by specific production regulations and national and community legislation. This Italian wine classification system was created in 1963 and has greatly increased the quality of wine exports from Italy. The D.O.C. indicates the geographical location wine must be produced in, standards of grape variety, color, flavor, aroma, acidity, alcohol content, period of aging and maximum yield that the producer must adhere to. Only wine adhering to these precise regulations can be labeled with the DOC. geographical indication.

Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita (DOCG) is the top ranking in the Italian wine ranking system. Not only does this wine meet the DOC requirements, it is also subject to more stringent controls in the areas of cultivation and processing. Wine is awarded this certification only after a specially appointed commission performs a taste test and passes intricate chemical testing.

Indicazione Geografica Tipica (IGT) is the second level of Italian wine classification that ranks between the vino da tavola (vdt) and denominazione di origine controllata (doc) categories. Labels may contain the region, the grape variety, and the vintage.



For French wine a system to protect the quality producers began in 1935, providing a designation that could be used if the producer achieved specific standards and met certain criteria in order to be assigned this designation, also known as **Appellation d'origine contrôlée (AOC)**. The designation criteria focuses on such aspects as land, grape varietal, viticultural practices, amount of yields, alcohol content, winemaking practices, and official tastings. The AOC

designation is used to eliminate winemakers and vineyards producing low quality products from using the names of the higher quality vineyards on their labels.

The designation of AOC is the highest classification given to a food product.

The other classifications are (from top to bottom): vin délimité de qualité supérieure, vin de pays, and vin de table.

Organic foods are made according to certain production standards. The use of conventional non-organic pesticides, insecticides and herbicides is greatly restricted and avoided as a last resort.

Organic food production is a heavily regulated industry, distinct from private gardening. Currently, the European Union, the United States, Canada, Japan and many other countries require producers to obtain special certification in order to market food as "organic" within their borders.

In European Union, organic farming is an agricultural system that seeks to provide the consumer, with fresh, tasty and authentic food while respecting natural life-cycle systems. To achieve this, organic farming relies on a number of objectives and principles, as well as common practices designed to minimise the human impact on the environment, while ensuring the agricultural system operates as naturally as possible.

Typical organic farming practices include:

- Wide crop rotation as a prerequisite for an efficient use of on-site resources
- Very strict limits on chemical synthetic pesticide and synthetic fertiliser use, livestock antibiotics, food additives and processing aids and other inputs
- Absolute prohibition of the use of genetically modified organisms
- Taking advantage of on-site resources, such as livestock manure for fertiliser or feed produced on the farm
- Choosing plant and animal species that are resistant to disease and adapted to local conditions
- Raising livestock in free-range, open-air systems and providing them with organic feed
- Using animal husbandry practices appropriate to different livestock species

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